

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Patrick Lam

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2022-04

Patrick Lam, former director of an assisted living community, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: January 28, 2022

Location: ALPLM Sound Studio

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:18 / 1.30 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on March 22, 2022.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Patrick Lam, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2022-04

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Patrick Lam was born in 1972 in Saigon, Vietnam. At the age of 7, Lam left Lai Thieu (now Ho Chi Minh City) in a wooden junk, which is a Chinese sailing ship, with several of his aunts. After being lost at sea for a week, the family happened upon an oil rig, and the oilmen took them to the island of Kuku, Indonesia. At that time, Kuku was a deserted island. Lam and his aunts were classified as “boat people” and stayed on the island for several months, surviving on fish and supplies brought by relief agencies. Lam and his family were taken to Hong Kong, then Singapore, and finally to San Francisco. They remained in San Francisco for one day before moving to Port Arthur, Texas. Shortly thereafter, Patrick and his aunts moved to Rogers Park in Chicago. As jobs became available, they moved out of the city and into various suburbs, including Palos Park, Sullivan, and Palatine. The full scope of Lam’s childhood experience can be found under *Immigrant Stories* and *Vietnam War*, under *Veterans Remember*.

Lam details his experience going through medical school in the Netherlands Antilles, and his subsequent move back to the Chicago area. He met his wife while she was studying to become a pharmacist in Chicago. When she was offered a job at a pharmacy in downstate Illinois, the young family moved to Springfield. At first Lam stayed home with their two young daughters, before he eventually became part of a growing assisted living community in Chatham, Illinois. He served as Executive Director for six and a half years before leaving to focus on his family. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, he had been working for the Illinois Department of Revenue for over a year. In the spring of 2021, an opening for the position of Executive Director at Cedarhurst, a local assisted living facility, sparked Lam’s interest. He began in May of 2021. By this time, the COVID-19 pandemic was seeing a decrease in infection rates as vaccines were becoming more prevalent. However, the severe staffing shortages fed into a chaotic environment which led to Lam working excessive hours. As Executive Director, he was on call at all hours. Throughout the interview, Lam describes in detail the struggles that led up to him making the difficult decision to leave after six months.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Chatham, Illinois; assisted living community; long term care facility; COVID-19 pandemic; COVID-19; vaccines; understaffing

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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